



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

New Freedom Program
Cycle 4 Call for Projects for Large Urbanized Areas
Frequently Asked Questions
June 2011

1. [What is “beyond the ADA”?](#)
 2. [What is “new”?](#)
 3. [If a project has received New Freedom funds from a prior funding cycle, would it still be eligible to receive funding in future New Freedom calls for projects?](#)
 4. [Is replacement of equipment that was in use on August 10, 2005 an eligible capital expense?](#)
 5. [What happens to the funds if no one applies for them? Do they get rolled over to the next funding cycle?](#)
 6. [Is there a maximum grant amount?](#)
 7. [Does MTC prefer small grant requests? Does the risk of not being awarded a grant increase with the requested grant amount?](#)
 8. [What is mobility management?](#)
 9. [Are planning projects eligible to receive funding?](#)
 10. [Are vouchers an eligible expense?](#)
 11. [Is travel training an eligible expense only for ADA-eligible individuals?](#)
 12. [Which activities are operating and which are capital?](#)
 13. [Are there predetermined amounts that will go toward capital versus operating projects?](#)
 14. [Are private, for-profit taxi companies eligible to partner with a public agency for proposed projects?](#)
 15. [Are public agencies with jurisdiction outside of an urbanized area eligible to apply?](#)
 16. [Can a grant be spent over a period of years or would an applicant need to apply for each year of funding separately?](#)
 17. [Are there page limits to the application?](#)
 18. [In what format would MTC prefer the electronic file of the application?](#)
 19. [Can I apply for New Freedom funds for a project in a small urbanized area and/or non-urbanized area?](#)
 20. [Does MTC score the small urbanized area and non-urbanized area applications?](#)
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1. Q. What is “beyond the ADA”?

A. Services that are not required under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.) or services, equipment, or facility enhancements that exceed minimum ADA obligations.

2. Q. What is “new”?

A. The New Freedom Program defines “new” as not having been implemented or operational on August 10, 2005 and not having an identified funding source as of August 10, 2005, as evidenced by inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or State TIP. In other words, “new” refers to projects that would not have consideration for funding and

enhanced services that would not be available to individuals with disabilities were it not for the New Freedom Program. Note that applicants may not terminate ADA paratransit enhancements or other services funded as of August 10, 2005 in an effort to reintroduce the service as “new” and then be eligible to receive New Freedom funds for those services.

3. Q. If a project has received New Freedom funds from a prior funding cycle, would it still be eligible to receive funding in future New Freedom calls for projects?

A. Yes. The project would still be considered “new” i.e. the receipt of New Freedom funding would not count towards the eligibility requirement for a project to not have had an identified funding source as of August 10, 2005.

4. Q. Is replacement of equipment that was in use on August 10, 2005 an eligible capital expense?

A. Yes. Replacement of the equipment would qualify as “new,” so it would be an eligible capital expense.

5. Q. What happens to the funds if no one applies for them? Do they get rolled over to the next funding cycle?

A. New Freedom funds are obligated when FTA approves a grant(s) for the New Freedom projects. New Freedom funds are available for obligation during the fiscal year of apportionment plus two additional years. For Cycle 4, which involves the FY2010 and FY2011 large urbanized area apportionments, the FY2010 funds must be obligated (i.e., in an FTA-approved grant) by September 30, 2012 and the FY2011 funds must be obligated by September 30, 2013.

Once projects are selected in the Cycle 4 large UA competitive process, transit operators with selected projects that are FTA grantees (i.e., transit operators that are direct recipients under Section 5307 and typically receive funds directly from FTA) must submit their own New Freedom grants to FTA. MTC reserves the right to reprogram funds if direct recipients fail to obligate the funds through grant submittal and FTA approval within 12 months of program approval. MTC will submit a New Freedom grant to FTA for transit operators or public entities that are not FTA grantees, and for non-profits that are selected in the large UA competitive process.

MTC anticipates that Cycle 4 will be oversubscribed, and that there will not be any trouble meeting the obligation deadlines; However, should any funds—either from our region or from another region—remain unobligated at the end of the period of availability, they will be reapportioned by FTA to all urbanized areas across the country according to the New Freedom formula.

6. Q. Is there a maximum grant amount?

A. For large urbanized area funds, MTC has not set a limit (maximum nor minimum) for grant amounts. Practically, however, a grant request should not exceed the target amount(s) for the urbanized area(s) in which the proposed project would provide services.

7. Q. Does MTC prefer small grant requests? Does the risk of not being awarded a grant increase with the requested grant amount?

A. No, MTC has no preference with respect to amount of the requested grant. However, MTC reserves the right to negotiate with applicants to award lesser amounts than requested to develop a program of projects that the application evaluation panel deems would be most advantageous to the region's disabled population.

8. Q. What is mobility management?

A. In the context of the New Freedom Program, it is any initiative that is aimed at enhancing transportation access for the disabled population through increased coordination. It could involve brokering, facilitating, encouraging, coordinating, and managing traditional and non-traditional services to expand the array of transportation services available to individuals with disabilities. Mobility management is an eligible capital expense. The Appendix of MTC's New Freedom Program Guidelines contains examples of mobility management projects.

9. Q. Are planning projects eligible to receive funding?

A. Yes, but only in regard to planning for a mobility management project.

10. Q. Are vouchers an eligible expense?

A. Yes, if used for: (a) mileage reimbursement as part of a volunteer driver program; and/or (b) a taxi trip; and/or (c) trips provided by a human service agency. Only new voucher programs or expansion of existing programs are eligible. Transit passes for use on existing fixed route or ADA complementary paratransit service are not eligible. Vouchers are considered an operational expense.

11. Q. Is travel training an eligible expense only for ADA-eligible individuals?

A. No. Travel training for any individual with a disability is an eligible expense.

12. Q. Which activities are operating and which are capital?

A. In general, capital activities are associated with tangible items that have a useful life of more than one year; whereas operating activities do not typically entail tangible items. An exception is mobility management activities, which may not entail tangible items, but are considered by law to be eligible capital expenses.

13. Q. Are there predetermined amounts that will go toward capital versus operating projects?

A. No. Projects will be selected based on the evaluation criteria.

14. Q. Are private, for-profit taxi companies eligible to partner with a public agency for proposed projects?

A. Yes. If the public agency wants to use New Freedom funds for accessible taxis, the agency can purchase the accessible vehicles or fund the accessibility enhancements, hold the title to the vehicle, and lease the vehicle to the taxicab provider who will put the accessible vehicle in service.

15. Q. Are public agencies with jurisdiction outside of an urbanized area eligible to apply?

A. Yes, if they are proposing a project that would provide services within an urbanized area.

16. Q. Can a grant be spent over a period of years or would an applicant need to apply for each year of funding separately?

A. Grants may be spent over a period of years. If an applicant wishes to spend a grant over a period of years, that should be indicated in the project implementation and timeline section of the application.

17. Q. Are there page limits to the application?

A. No.

18. Q. In what format would MTC prefer the electronic file of the application?

A. PDF.

19. Q. Can I apply for New Freedom funds for a project in a small urbanized area and/or non-urbanized area?

A. Yes, but not through this large urbanized area (UA) call for projects. The small urbanized area (UA) and non-UA call for projects is conducted by Caltrans. As of May 2011, Caltrans does not have a schedule for the next small and non-UA call for projects. Additional information about the small and non-UA call for projects can be found on the Caltrans website: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/MassTrans/5317.html>. Small UAs in the Bay Area include Fairfield, Gilroy-Morgan Hill, Livermore, Napa, Petaluma, Vacaville, and Vallejo.

20. Q. Does MTC score the small urbanized area and non-urbanized area applications?

A. MTC does not plan to score or evaluate small urbanized area (UA) and non-UA applications in future calls for projects; However, MTC staff will be available to provide information and assistance to potential applicants. MTC will also provide the Regional Certifications and Assurances that are needed for the application.